

Message

---

**From:** Cogliano, Vincent [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=51F2736376AC4D32BAD2FE7CFEF2886B-COGLIANO, VINCENT]  
**Sent:** 11/12/2013 4:20:37 PM  
**To:** Reisa, Jim [JReisa@nas.edu]  
**Subject:** RE: Tom Burke - Risk Policy Report

Thanks, Jim. He's a good choice and I'm looking forward to it ... Best regards, Vince

---

**From:** Reisa, Jim [mailto:JReisa@nas.edu]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, November 12, 2013 11:12 AM  
**To:** Olden, Kenneth; Cogliano, Vincent  
**Subject:** Tom Burke - Risk Policy Report

Risk Policy Report - 11/12/2013

## Obama Taps Long-Time Science Advisor To Head EPA's Research Office

Posted: November 11, 2013

President Obama intends to nominate Thomas Burke, a professor at Johns Hopkins University and a long-time EPA science advisor, to lead the agency's Office of Research & Development (ORD), a post that will require Senate confirmation and will likely renew focus on the agency's chemical, air quality and other risk assessment programs.

The White House announced Nov. 7 that it intends to nominate Burke to serve as the assistant administrator for ORD.

Burke, associate dean of The Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, chaired an influential National Academy of Sciences (NAS) panel on ways to improve EPA risk assessments and has served on numerous EPA advisory panels, including its Science Advisory Board (SAB).

The NAS panel he chaired in 2008 issued a landmark report, "Science & Decisions: Advancing Risk Assessment" that has become the basis for reforming the agency's premiere chemical risk assessment program known as Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS). At the report's release, Burke in an interview with *Risk Policy Report* emphasized that one of the committee's major goals is breaking down the backlog of EPA's most important risk assessments, by defining a level of data necessary to make a decision -- and getting "on with it."

"Anyone familiar with risk assessment knows it is bogged down," Burke said in a December 2008 interview. "There will always be uncertainty. The quest for data is endless. We're asking EPA to define a level of data necessary to make a decision. We're saying, 'Get on with it'" (*Risk Policy Report*, Dec. 9, 2008).

More recently, Burke voiced a similar view as a member of EPA's chartered SAB reviewing the draft recommendations of SAB's panel reviewing an EPA white paper on perchlorate, a step in the agency's process for establishing a national drinking water standard for the rocket fuel. Burke was one of several SAB members who raised concerns that the subpanel's recommendations could delay EPA regulatory action. He pressed for the report to be changed to state that it is "not the intention of this committee to lead to another decade of delay" in drafting a perchlorate maximum contaminant level goal (MCLG). "There is a real need for an MCLG to protect" iodine-deficient pregnant women and their embryos, Burke said. (*Risk Policy Report*, April 2)

And in 2011, as EPA was facing heightened scrutiny over its IRIS program, he warned that the agency must succeed in making its scientific research programs more transparent and sound in order to bring credibility back to agency science, or EPA will risk increased scrutiny from House Republicans and industry that could prompt a "crisis."

"You can't fail this time," Burke told EPA officials. "The sleeping giant is that EPA science is on the rocks . . . if you fail, you become irrelevant, and that is kind of a crisis," he told a joint meeting of EPA's Science Advisory Board and EPA's Board of Scientific Counselors charged with looking at the reorganization of the agency's research programs (*Risk Policy Report*, July 5, 2011).

Last year, an SAB panel that Burke chaired sent a report and recommendations to then-Administrator Lisa Jackson on integrating agency science and how science can best influence EPA policy. Outgoing Bush Administrator Stephen Johnson requested the report of SAB in 2009 to inform his successor by recommending ways EPA could best strengthen the science that underpins its regulations. Under Burke's leadership, the SAB panel undertook extensive review, interviewing ORD scientists and managers nationwide to inform their conclusions.

From those interviews, the panel learned just how isolated the regional offices were from "the brain trust of EPA science" in ORD, Burke said during a March 2012 SAB meeting discussing a draft of the report. SAB's report suggests EPA "make science integration a more consistent priority"; "strengthen management oversight" of all aspects of implementing science integration; and "strengthen support for EPA scientists to participate in science integration." The report's conclusions caused concern from some of Burke's SAB colleagues, who worried the report's conclusions could be taken out of context and used unfairly by agency critics against EPA science (*Risk Policy Report*, March 27, 2012).

Burke, a longtime member of Hopkins' faculty, is a professor the Department of Health Policy and Management and has joint appointments with the Department of Environmental Health Sciences and its School of Medicine Department of Oncology, according to the university's website. Additionally, Burke serves as co-director of the Johns Hopkins Risk Sciences and Public Policy Institute.

Before joining Hopkins, Burke was a research scientist and manager with New Jersey's Department of Environmental Protection, and later served as deputy commissioner for New Jersey's Department of Health, according to the White House announcement.